Fair Maori Women---
Some Strange Customs

Thus runs the chant that used to be sung by the Maoris of New Zealand at the naming of a female child:

"May she be industrious in cultivating the ground,
In searching for shell fish,
In weaving garments,
In weaving ornamental mats,
May she be strong to carry burdens."

That is the sort of helpmeet that the Maori woman was expected to be to her husband in the old days. In this respect the infringements of civilization, Christian churches, government schools, have done little to improve her lot in life. Maori women are still the hewers of wood and drawers of water for their husbands, at least when they are old. When they are young there's a difference. If the Maori girl works in the fields nowadays (indoor service she refuses as degrading) it is to procure the means of buying new dresses or bonnets after the fashion of her white sisters, or ribbons and laces, even on occasion stockings and shoes. They are pretty and bewitching some of these modern Maori girls with their natural grace and beauty fresh, unspoiled and just alluringly tinctured with the spice of European coquetry.

MAORI TEMPLE.

Hear the enthusiasm of a stolid Briton over them. Mr. Hay, author of "Brighter Britain," writes:

"Bright and cheerful, neat and comely, pleasant partners at a bush ball are these half anglicized daughters of the Ngatewhatua. They can prattle prettily in their soft Maori English, while their glancing eyes and saucy lips are provoking the by no means too hard hearts of Pakeha (white) bushmen. Then would you appreciate the charms of our Maori belles, under the influence of music and the dance, supple forms and graceful motions, scented hair and flower wreaths, smiles and sparkling eyes, the graces of nature not wholly lost under the polish of civilization.

A Maori Belle.

"Pre-eminent among the young women of Tanoa is Rakope, princess of the Ngatewhatua. She is a beauty, our Rakope, and more, she is good as she is beautiful. Her color is a soft dusky brown, under which you can see the blood warming her dimpled cheeks. Her figure is perfection's self, ripe and round and full, while every movement shows some new grace and more seductive curve. Her rich brown hair reaches far below her slender waist, and when it is dressed with crimson pohutakawa blossoms, the orange flowers of the kowhaingutu kaka or the soft, downy white feathers that the Maoris prize, it would compel the admiration of any London drawing room. Her features may not be Grecian, but what professional beauty of London can compare with our Rakope as she is, glowing with the rich warm color, the subtle delicacies of form and all the luxuriant beauty that is born between the South sea and the sun?

"To hear Rakope sing is to believe in the sirens, to chat with her and receive her looks and smiles is to be the victim of a gentle witchcraft. Oh, Rakope, I hope you will some day marry a pakeha rangatira (white gentleman) and endow him with your 10,000 acres."

Beautiful as the Maori Rakope undeniably is, she commonly dresses in a calico frock—and nothing else unless it is a straw hat. Her flounces and ribbons are not always new or fresh when she is costumed in the latest Auckland modes for church. If she dons silk stockings and tight slippers for the dance she does so with infinite pain and kicks them off at her earliest opportunity to smoke a comfortable black pipe with some of the ugliest of the old women of her tribe, and, moreover, in her home, which is smoky beyond the peradventure of a doubt, probably smelly, possibly dirty, she commonly wears nothing more than an old native blanket and would feel not the slightest shame were it to slip to the ground before you. For she is a child of nature and free from artificial standards, like one of nature's fearless and splendid animals.

Maori nature does not change. The acquired veneer of European civilization is at best but skin deep and the girls, one and all, still treasure the native tufted blankets and the trinkets of polished greenstone, dogs' teeth, boars' tusks, polished shells and feathers, in which my friends delighted to be photographed. But with all this the Maori girls possess so undeniable a charm that not even the lines of tattooing that still ornament the chins of some of them, though the practice is no longer a common one with this generation, can spoil it. It is said that one or two Maori belles have married titles. One is curious to know how old age will treat them, for it is then that Maori women deteriorate into the most hideous of creatures. Whether that may be the result of the hard and ungrateful lives they live in New Zealand and might be modified by quite another sort of existence is a problem that I have never seen demonstrated.

In the old days Maori chiefs and freemen were permitted to have several wives and the possession of a suitable assortment was supposed to indicate dignity and greatness, the mother of the first born ranking as head wife, the others remaining little better than slaves. As a rule there was no distinctive marriage rite. Girls as they grew up bestowed favors on whom they pleased and the more suitors they had the more valuable were they accounted. When a girl had a preference for one suitor the matter usually ended by her going home with him and the two lived as man and wife.

Men were sometimes known to carry off a girl by force when her relatives objected to their union, and on the other hand women sometimes committed suicide to avoid living with men whom they disliked. Occasionally there would be a family conclave over the marriage of a woman, the chief feature of which was long-winded speeches by the brothers of the bride, who, in any case, were the ones to be consulted, the parents having little to say in the matter. It sometimes happened that a girl would be betrothed (tapu) to a man in her infancy, but as a rule they seem to have had quite as much to do with their own fates in this respect as have our American girls of today.

Divorce was even an easier performance than marriage. The dissatisfied husband had only to put the wife out of doors, after which it was lawful for any other man to marry her; nor did divorce operate to the disadvantage of the woman. In fact, women sometimes exchanged husbands. The old colonists and the historians of those times report that once a woman was married infidelity was rare so long as she was well treated (from the Maori point of view) and had children. In the reverse case virtue was far from common, just as young girls before marriage enjoyed much more than European freedom without reproach.

Yet there are some dainty romances told by the transmitters of legends in the soft South sea evenings. Lovers of legendary lore will find interesting the graceful tale of the wooing of Hine Moa and Tutanekai. Here one learns of the surpassing beauty of the maiden Hine Moa and her confession of love for the low-born Tutanekai, which that timid fellow could scarce bring himself to believe even after receiving the confirmatory squeeze of the hand; of how she swam across the lake of Rotorua to join him when all of the canoes had been hidden because of the suspicions of her friends, and then of how she coyly summoned her lover and coquettishly hid herself that he might not find her too quickly. To this day her descendants along the shore of the lake tell the tale of Hine Moa's beauty and chant the lines of the soft poem.

Many of the curious old Maori customs are dying out. Cannibalism has not been practiced for half a century. The present religion of the Maoris is a sort of Christianity inexplicably intermingled with ancient tribal forms and rites. Few of the Maoris now tattoo their faces, a custom formerly universal. One occasionally sees an old and orthodox chief or high man whose face is covered with the curves, spirals and other designs denoting no mean degree of artistic ability. It was rather a serious business, this tattooing, and the operation usually extended over months. One chief, who was in a hurry to attain the desirably fierce aspect that was supposed to terrify the enemy and win the hearts of women, undertook to have th whole scheme of decoration finished in one day, but his courage was greater than his stamina, for he died under the knife.

In former times these highly ornamented heads were greatly prized as war trophies. Among the English adventurers who came to the islands in the early days a ghastly trade developed in the heads. Sometimes as much as £20 was paid for a specimen, which went to some museum or collection in Europe. Of course, these heads were supposed to be obtained in fair and open warfare between the tribes, but it is a question whether the ready market did not result in private enterprises of decapitation. Judge Maning, in his "Old New Zealand," relates a conversation which he had with a "pakena mori," or naturalized white man, who had a collection of these human relics.

"'Looking at the eds, sir?' It was one of the pakehas formerly mentioned. 'Yes,' said I, turning 'round just the least possible thing quicker than the ordinary. 'Eds has been a getting scarce,' says he. 'I should think so,' says I. 'We ain't 'ad a ed this long time,' says he. 'The devil,' says I. 'One o' them eds has been hurt bad,' says he. 'I should think all were rather so,' says I. 'Oh, no, only one on 'em,' says he; 'the skull is split and it won't fetch nothin',' says he. 'Oh, murder! I see, now,' says I. 'Eds was werry scarce,' says he, shaking his own 'ed. 'Ah,' said I. 'They had to tattoo a slave a bit ago,' says he, 'and the villain ran away, tattooin' and all!' says he. 'What?' said I. 'Bolted afore he was fit to kill,' says he. 'Stole off with his own head?' says I. 'That's just it,' says he. 'Capital felony!' says I. 'You may say that, sir,' says he. 'Good morning,' said I, and walked away pretty smartly. 'Loose notions about in this country,' said I to myself."

It is a question whether this race of stalwart and beautiful people is not dying out. From **1840 to 1870 their** numbers fell from 150,000 to 40,000. Since then their numbers have remained about stationary, but this reckoning includes halfbreeds in the count. Unsanitary conditions of life keep the death rate up to an equality with the birth rate

MAORI CHIEF WITH FACE CARVINGS.

These Maoris might be rich if they choose to lease or cultivate their rich lands, but they are a lazy, sun-loving, child-hearted people, and are content to dig kauri gum, shear sheep or clear brush for the whites. The beauty of the women results in many marriages, as well as less formal alliances with the whites, and it is to be feared that within a few years a full-blood of this splendid aboriginal type will be hard to find.

How to Reduce Flesh

"Give me a woman who is not the slave of the bon-bon, soda water and chicken pate habit, and, be her weight what it may, I'll guarantee not only to rid and cure her of superfluous flesh, but make her as lean and healthy as a hound in the process."

That is what the woman in the panne velvet gown said to her friend when they met while out calling the other day.

The friend looked reproachfully over her triple chins at the panne velvet gown and remarked, "I suppose that's a joke, or, if you are going to advance some such advice as skipping rope, running a carpet sweeper or walking twice a day to the top of a ten-story building, please don't. I've tried all those schemes and grew fat on them, as well as losing a good digestion and lots of valuable time. Remedies for women of your waist measure, which I should guess to be about twenty-two inches, can hardly apply to me. I doubt if you ever weighed more than 135 pounds in all your life."

"Two years ago," solemnly averred the panne velvet's owner, "I tipped the beam at 179 pounds, with the brightest prospect of running rapidly up to the 200 mark. I had a long line of fat grandmothers ahead of me and there was not a flesh-erasing scheme that I had not tried with discouraging results. I was on the point of resigning every hope of preserving my girlhood's throat and waist line when my family physician guaranteed to cure me.

"Of course he regulated my diet. Excessive flesh is invariably the consequence of digestive irregularity, though one may not be sensible of malassimilation, and down on a piece of paper he set a list of foods I could eat, with an equally careful catalogue of those that were to be avoided. Sweets, cream, bakers' bread, potatoes, fried foods, grapes, peaches, bananas, plums, beets, carrots, ground artichokes, oatmeal, green vegetables cooked in cream and water with meals were all absolutely prohibited. One cup of coffee with milk in it, some whole wheat bread, one egg and an orange was what he gave me for my breakfast, alternated with fish, toast and an apple when I cried out for a change. At luncheon I was allowed to eat eggs or fish or a wee bit of roast fowl with butterless bread; green salad minus oil or cream in the dressing and a plain boiled green vegetable, seasoned with salt. For dinner I took clams, oysters, fish without sauce, green vegetables, salad dressed with salt and vinegar, a scrap of pretty well done beef, when I wearied of fish, and apples or oranges for dessert. I was allowed celery, radishes, olives, salt fish, plenty of gluten bread, without butter, a little wine, but not a crumb of cake, not a sugar plum, not a drop of soup and not a taste of water.

"One and a half or two hours after each one of my frugal meals I was told to drench my chastened stomach with long draughts of perfectly pure water, neither cold nor hot, but at a temperature of about 68, and under pain of increasing weight I was directed to walk four miles a day, a mile more if I liked, but not a half a mile less, as I hoped to be saved from a fat middle age.

"The conditions looked hard, but the doctor was firm and I was ambitious for a twenty-two-inch waist, so after a little futile pleading for softer terms of self-denial I went seriously into training. I was advised to take my exercise in the morning and I agreed. Every day, rain or shine, and in spite of clamorous committees and tyrannical dressmakers, I rose from the breakfast table, arrayed in my short skirt, and tramped off the four miles. Coming home I sat down and spent fifteen minutes drinking a full pint and a half of water that had been boiled and set away in a bottle to cool, or I took Saratoga Kissengen one day and Vichey the next.

"By my watch I timed myself for the potations due after luncheon and dinner and I am proud to say I never missed the two brimming goblets.

"After two months of this treatment I began to feel distinctly slimmer. On weighing I found I had lost only five pounds, my gowns were as tight of fit as ever and my chin as richly luxuriant. That war a discouraging outlook, but I grasped again at hope, when the doctor bade me go on. 'It will take you all of a year and a half,' he said, 'to get rid not only of the accumulated fat, but to correct the tendency of your digestive system to convert four-fifths of everything you eat into loose masses of fat.'

"I took heart of grace; tedious as the process was, I kept on, and now I feel free to say that the reason nine-tenths of the stout women fail in their endeavors to remove their flesh is because they demand immediate rewards for their efforts, and finding they do not become appreciably thinner in a month or six weeks, relapse to a normal diet or grasp at some new device for reduction.

"I grimly determined I would see the cure out, and my determination was strengthened, first by the doctor's assurance that the slow process of reduction is the one and only one that neither injures the digestion nor wrinkles the skin."

BEAUTIFUL MAORI GIRL, WITH FACE TATTOOING AND FULL COSTUME.

MAORI BELLE.